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Superintendent of Schools

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December 24, 2024

Colchester Board of Education Statement on the Suspension of the Hayward Public Service Academy Development

The Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) has notified us that they have made the difficult decision to stay the development of the Hayward Public Service Academy. Based upon our communications with them, this is a direct response to the actions of the Board of Education last week, and the concerns raised by community members, particularly regarding the enrollment of out-of-town students at the proposed magnet school.

While this news may be disappointing to many, we believe that this decision is best for all concerned. First and foremost, it ensures that out-of-district students don't select a school in the lottery that may not open next fall. Second, it gives our Board and community adequate time to share information and weigh the pros and cons of adding a "school within a school" magnet program at Bacon Academy.

We acknowledge the anxiety this proposed program has caused, and we want to reassure everyone that the BOE has always been committed to providing equitable access to quality education for all students, both within and outside our district. This commitment remains unwavering. We also recognize that misinformation and misunderstandings about the project have spread widely, creating confusion and undermining productive dialogue. We plan to utilize the additional time afforded us to have a constructive, fact-based conversation about the future of the Hayward Public Service Academy.

It is our hope that the community recognizes that this project was proposed with the best of intentions and reflects a willingness of the Superintendent and the Board of Education to listen to suggestions and respond. In the winter of 2023, we were encouraged to increase revenue and to address decreasing enrollment in the high school. This project has the potential to increase enrollment by up to 160 students and revenue by $1 million or more each year.

We want to extend our gratitude to the State Department of Education, the Regional School Choice Office, and the Governor for their support of this initiative. We also want to thank Amy Begue, Ashley Zaugg, Jessica Kuckel, and Daniel Sullivan for their dedication and hard work on this project. Public service and allied health fields are vital to our future, and we remain committed to exploring ways to provide meaningful opportunities for our students in these areas.

Sincerely,
The Colchester Board of Education

Alexander Oliphant, Chair

Christopher Rivers, Vice-Chair

Margo Gignac, Secretary

Donna Antonacci

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